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HORACE'S SABINE FARM.

By JOHN H. GOULD.

On a fine morning in June, accompanied by a few friends, I started from Rome on an excursion to the Sabine Farm of Horace. We passed the gate of San Lorenzo as the morning sun was gilding the tops of the eastern hills. The yellow harvest that covered the Campagna, as far as the eye could reach, undulated like a sea of gold with every passing breeze, while the long line of ruined aqueducts and broken arches that spanned the tenantless and solitary fields, gave to the scene an impressive and picturesque grandeur; herds of cattle were browsing beneath the shadows of the ruins, and now and then a shepherd-boy, sallow and attenuated, looked out upon us as we rode by, half wild with surprise to see human beings passing him in such cheerful and hilarious mood; Soracte, glowing in the morning radiance, and the Alban range of hills with their villas and gardens, looked gay and cheerful in the distance, while the further mountains, encircling the expanse before us, as in a frame-work of gold, inclosed a landscape that elevated our hearts to the highest sense of the beautiful and poetical, exciting such emotions as can only be felt in the midst of scenes and associations which have been hallowed by time and immortalized by the inspired pen of a poet. It was a glorious morning! and as we rapidly coursed the Campagna, our hearts bounded forward to those classic scenes so memorable and interesting to the student of Rome-life.

A few hours brought us to the little inn of the Sibyl at Tivoli, where we ordered our breakfast, which was soon spread for us, beneath the cool shade of the little temple that stands so graceful in its chaste and classic beauty, upon the very edge of the precipice. The scene before me was one of the deepest interest. Far beyond stretched the Campagna—its gentle undulations reaching to the sea. The ravine, at my feet, was as picturesque and wild as an American scene—its fresh and luxuriant vegetation waving with the summer breeze. The little inn has much to recommend it. The artists, who are in the habit of visiting these hills for the purpose of study, make it a resting-place, and they had left many a curious memento on its walls—of uncouth heads of men and animals—of half-finished trees and landscapes, and now and then a satirical caricature, that told its own story, at the expense of some unfortunate brother, whose redundant hair and beard, or peculiarity of face or manner, rendered him a fitting subject for their inventive humor. Our breakfast was all that could be desired, of fresh trout from the Anio, and the best bread that Italian domestic skill could produce, and highly did we enjoy it; and, I will venture to say, that since the days of Mæcenas, no jollier party had ever made those rocks to echo with pleasanter mirth and frolic than ours.

My companions left me to wander among the hills, or to descend the precipice to see the falls below. The scene was too enchanting to be lightly scanned, and I sat looking

out upon it, studying its varied points of interest, and associating them in my imagination with some event in the life of the poet, whose name is so closely identified with every hill and valley around. The pretty temple which crowns the edge of the precipice, looks serenely down upon the wild scene below. It is a graceful relic of the past, and blends its charming beauty with the rugged and majestic forms of nature around it, with a harmony and grace truly enchanting. Though a ruin, it still retains enough of its original form to show its graceful proportions and symmetry. Among all the remains of the architectural glories of the Roman Empire, this one leaves, perhaps, the most agreeable and cheerful impressions upon the mind.

While my companions were absent, enjoying their ramble among the galleries and ravines of this romantic spot, I reposed quietly beneath the shadows of the temple, indulging in a reverie of the past, and calling up to my imagination the incidents of those days, so memorably associated with Horace and his companions. The return of my friends soon brought me back to the realities of the present hour. Our horses were ordered, and, deferring any further examination of the falls and the classic ruins of Tibur until my return, we set off for the accomplishment of the objects of our journey.

The country through which the Anio runs is very beautiful. The valley is highly cultivated, and at this time its orchards were filled with the bright promise of summer. The banks of the stream are overshadowed with luxuriant trees of noble growth, through which the winding stream rushes with impetuosity. The description given of it, by Horace—eighteen hundred years ago—is equally applicable at this day. "The precipitately rapid Anio" has lost none of its ancient characteristics, and were it not for the evidences of a remote past, which are visible everywhere among these valleys, an American might imagine he was merely strolling along the margin of one of the streams of his native land.

• The valley, for its natural beauty, is worthy of all the praise that has been bestowed upon it. It is fruitful, and everywhere abundantly watered. Several streams from the mountain contribute to the full volume of the Anio, which, in the spring-time, is swollen, and rushes with great rapidity towards the Tiber. The green meadows which swell upward from the margin of the stream give a quiet and pastoral character to the country, that contrasts agreeably and pleasingly with the precipitous mountains that lift their heads to the clouds on every hand. As we further ascend among these Sabine hills, the country becomes more and more picturesque—the mountains increase in number and interest. Here and there, in the distance, can be seen an elevated peak that hides its dim outline in the clouds. Upon others, the white walls of towns are visible, looking like fortified and frowning castles. These are cities of the middle ages, and have been placed there for the security of the inhabitants from the attack of the hordes that, at one period, desolated the valleys. These towns, so far up and

difficult of access, are objects of great interest to the traveller, as he regards them as parts of the *dramatis personæ* in the tragical and bloody drama of the dark ages.

The poor people who dwell in these solitary and lofty cities, retain, to the present day, many of the costumes and habits of their ancestors of three hundred years ago. They are employed by the lordly patron in the cultivation of the fields, of the valleys, and live, as the poor of Italy always live, upon hard-earned and precarious bread. There is something melancholy in the fortunes and characters of these poor mountaineers. As winter approaches, the sad and trying condition to which they are sometimes reduced, is pitiable enough.

To a stranger, the picturesque character of the situations of these towns—the grandeur of the scenery around, and the fertile and rich valley, with its beautiful streams that wind, like rivers of silver, through groves of chestnut and fields of pastoral loveliness—are objects of great interest, not only from their intrinsic claims upon his admiration, but from the classical associations with which they are all connected. The city of Madama, with its population of two hundred souls, is situated on one of the highest peaks of this mountain region. The clouds floated, at this time, at the foot of its walls, while the summits of its towers shone in the resplendent glory of the summer's sky. *Vico Varo* (old *Varium*) is similarly situated. The slopes of the hills around it are ornamented with chestnut and olive groves, and it seems to rise, like a huge battlement, amid a sea of vegetation of surpassing beauty and richness.

We soon reached the convent of *Santa Cosa Mato*, from the site of which we had a fine view of the village of *Saracinesco*, inhabited by the descendants of the Saracens. Curiosity led us to pay a visit to the monks, who inhabit this interesting and romantically situated convent. They received us with kindness, and silently offered for our refreshment the white *Orvieto* wine of the country, which we drank with pleasure. This convent is situated on an eminence above the *Anio*, about two miles from *Vico Varo*, and is worthy of a visit for the beauty of its site, and for the many objects of interest in its neighborhood. After resting ourselves, we descended to the cliffs and galleries, which are cut through them, to the stream that runs far below. The incredible labor of the monks in cutting passages through these frowning rocks, could not have been more usefully employed for us—for we were thereby enabled to obtain a fine view of the river, which runs in the picturesque ravine at our feet. The monks had built several little chapels in the caves of the rocks, and adorned them with images of the virgin and some of the saints; and here, at times, they descended to their silent and solitary worship. These rocky caves had a very cheerful appearance. Some of the interiors had been cleaned and white-washed, and were rendered otherwise attractive. The inhabitants of this convent are very civil people, and although they received us without ceremony or show of welcome, they

treated us with agreeable kindness. The interior of the cells of the convent resembled those of a well-ordered prison; the furniture was very scanty; still, an air of neatness prevailed in all the apartments. Here are to be seen some of the finest cypresses in Italy. The *Via Valeria* once crossed the river at this place by a bridge.

After satisfying our curiosity in examining the objects that seemed worthy of observation, we set out for the *Sabine* farm of *Horace*! Returning on the same road we had passed over, we turned to the left, and proceeded up a valley, skirted by high and unwooded mountains—passing the town of *Cantalupo*, situated on a high hill at the opening of the valley of the *Digentia*. Thence we went through the valley over a white, pebbly bottom—the channel of the stream. The width of this channel showed that the river, at times, is quite wide, from the rains from the mountains. The stream, at this time, however, was inconsiderable. After advancing about four miles, we entered upon a most wretched road near the river, which continued for two miles further up—leading to the town of *Licenza* (the *Digentia* of *Horace*). From this place a guide conducted us to *Horace's* farm. The site is a short distance above the road, and not between it and the river, as *Murray* says. It is on a platform of land which falls abruptly down into a sort of wooden gorge which separates it from the town of *Licenza*, which stands in front of it on a hill about five hundred feet high. Very lofty mountains surround both the town and the farm—among them is the celebrated *Mons Lucritelis*, about five thousand feet high, and *Monto Cornarrano*, which is said to be one of the most beautiful mountains of Italy. Two fountains are said to rise under this latter mountain, one of which is supposed to be the celebrated *Blandusia*, mentioned by the poet. There are few or none of the remains of *Horace's* villa now to be seen. We were shown a piece of *Mosaic* floor which is said to be a portion of the house—but of this we had our doubts. The soil does not appear to be good. The solitude of the place, and the murmuring of the river *Digentia* below, and the lofty and grand mountains which surround it, make it a proper place for a scholar and a lover of retirement.

Horace must have been very fond of this retreat, as he spent his time between this *Sabine* farm and his villa at *Tibur*. One can readily imagine how attractive to him must have been this beautiful and retired country, surrounded on every hand with the most lofty mountains, and watered by beautiful streams, that spread fertility and freshness in their wanderings. Even at this day it possesses many charms, yet the absence of that cultivation which it had in his lifetime, must diminish the attractions for which it was remarkable. To the intelligent traveller, the associations with which it is connected render it an object of great interest. The scholar, familiar with the life and writings of the poet, cannot but regard it with a feeling bordering on enthusiasm, and will give free scope to his imagination, in re-peopleing its cheerful halls with the poet and his companions. The farm, it is well known, was the

gift of his patron and friend, Mæcenas. His introduction to him became the turning-point in his fortunes.

Horace was a sensible and delightful man—and lived, as he says himself, "in moderate contentment." "Poverty," in his own words, "was the inspiration of his verse."

"Paupertas impulit audax,
Ut versus facerem."

Horace died in the same year as his friend Mæcenas. We have the following description of his person: "He was of short stature—dark eyes, and dark hair, but early tinged with grey. His health was not always good. At one period he was fat. Augustus joked him upon his fat belly. When young, he was irascible in temper, but easily placable. In dress careless. His habits frugal and abstemious, although, on occasions, he indulged in free conviviality. He liked choice wine, and in the society of friends enjoyed the luxuries of the times."

Although Horace has informed us that he was a man of moderate fortune and pretensions, he probably lived in a style of refined comfort, such as would be thought luxurious and expensive in our day. If his floors were covered with mosaics, as we may be led to believe from those that have been discovered on the site of his house—and if the marble columns and capitals which have been discovered there, were portions of his "humble Sabine farmhouse," his ideas of moderate and frugal living differed from our own. Mæcenas, in presenting him this farm, did, no doubt, exercise great liberality; and it is to be presumed that so munificent and wealthy a patron, would not have been contented to have given to his favorite poet and friend, a house not corresponding with his own fortune and generosity. The estate produced corn, olives, and wine, and was surrounded with pleasant and shady woods. The farm was superintended by a bailiff (villicus), and cultivated by five families of free Coloni. Horace employed about eight slaves for his own domestic purposes.

It is pleasant to render to the poet the tribute of our admiration for the many excellences of his character. To those familiar with his works, it is apparent that his love of nature and retirement was a marked characteristic, and although he lived in a luxurious age, and amid the splendors of a luxurious court, he found the greatest pleasure, and the truest happiness in the midst of these mountains. His little Sabine farm afforded him more real satisfaction and delight, than he ever obtained among his courtly acquaintances, or even in the familiar intercourse of the proud and stately Augustus. "No ivory, nor gilded arch," says he, in one of his Odes, 18th, "makes a figure in my house. No Hymettian beams rest upon pillars cut out of the extreme parts of Africa. But honor, and a liberal vein of genius are mine, and the man of fortune makes his court to me, who am but poor! I importune the gods no farther, nor do I require of my friend any larger enjoyments; sufficiently happy with my Sabine farm alone." Then follows a rebuke which might apply to

many of ourselves: "You put out marble to be hewn, though with one foot in the grave, and unmindful of a sepulchre, are building houses, and are busy to extend the shore of the sea—not rich enough while restrained to limits of the land."

"I shall be better able to extend my small revenues by contracting my desires, than if I could join the kingdom of Halyatticus to the Phrygian plains. Much is wanting to those who covet much. 'Tis well with him whom God hath given what is necessary, with a sparing hand." Horace has, while praising his own moderation, confessed his fondness for convivial enjoyments. "Fill up the polished bowls with oblivious massic, pour out the perfumed ointments from the capacious shells. Who takes care to hasten the chaplets of fresh parsley and myrtle? Whom shall the Venus pronounce to be toast-master? In wild carouse I will become frantic as the Bacchanalians. It is delightful to me to play the madman at the reception of my friend."

The day's enjoyment among these classic scenes has given to me many a pleasant hour. These hallowed remembrances are cherished in my heart. While I stood in their midst, my imagination filled up the void, produced by time, and repeople that solitary spot with the breathing, living glories of the classic age. The myrtle groves are no longer there. The murmuring river runs no longer between banks of waving myrtle or chestnut. Solitude and silence are there, and the memories of the past. They alone sanctify the poet's name with that of him who favored his genius, and who was his best and truest friend.

The dark shadows of evening were falling upon the distant fields of the Campagna and the far off sea, as we reëntered the gates of Tivoli.

DIVER AND VOYAGER.

"VOYAGER, hast thou ever been down
Where thy boat glides now,
To the roots of the jagged rocks that frown
O'er a death-white brow?
To the wasted gems that slip away
From the mocking wave,
Where the shark and sword-fish grimly play
Round the sailor's grave?"

"No, diver, no: but thy pearls I wear
As my boat glides here;
Thou hast told of the rock in ambush; there
Never need I steer,
Because, at thy bidding, the traitor wave
Hath restored the dead,
The face of the hungry sea I brave,
And I feel no dread."

"Light voyager, 'tis of humanity
That I tell my tale."

"Pale diver, that is the same bright sea
Over which I sail."

LUCY LARCOM.